

MEETING SUMMARY

Project: Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for
Management Alternatives of the Rio Grande Canalization Project
U.S. Section, International Boundary and Water Commission (USIBWC)

Objective: Meeting with Commissioner to discuss formulation of alternatives

Date: August 14, 2002

Prepared by: Carlos Victoria, Parsons ES

A meeting with United States Commissioner Carlos M. Ramirez was held on July 22, 2002 at the USIBWC offices in El Paso to discuss issues raised by the Rio Grande Heritage (ARGH) regarding the reformulation of alternatives for the EIS. A meeting agenda and attendee list are attached.

1. Initial Presentation

Commissioner Ramirez welcomed attendees and stated USIBWC interest in incorporating input from all stakeholders in the EIS process. Representatives from the ARGH acknowledged the benefits of USIBWC's open consultation process and effort to incorporate additional input from stakeholders since the completion of the Alternatives Formulation Report (AFR). Key issues discussed are summarized in items 2 to 4 below, following the sequence of the meeting agenda.

2. Flood control improvements vs. stream restoration / enhancement

ARGH representatives indicated the need for further evaluation of non-structural flood control measures for environmental improvements. Use of two-dimensional hydraulic modeling was suggested in support of that evaluation

Parsons stated issues presented in their July 3, 2002 letter to Commissioner Ramirez. This letter addressed concerns stated in a May 31, 2002 correspondence from the Southwest Environmental Center (SWEC). Parsons emphasized the following two issues:

- While valid for other riverine systems, flood control improvements have a limited potential for environmental improvements because the 100-year flood is unlikely to create sustainable conditions for stream restoration.
- The use of more complex, two-dimensional flood modeling is not justified for assessment of additional environmental improvements because such models actually indicate a reduced flood potential.

3. Canalization Project Stream Morphology and Limitations

ARGH representatives indicated their belief that return to historical conditions pre-dating Elephant Butte Reservoir is the basis for restoration. USIBWC pointed out that that time reference is incorrect as the Canalization Project was constructed over 30 years latter, and no changes in flow regulation have occurred or are anticipated.

Parsons pointed out that the extent of the active floodplain (subject to recurrent flooding) is almost entirely within the USIBWC right-of-way, and is dictated by reduced upstream flows, not by the levees. The length reduction during Canalization Project construction was limited to approximately 10 percent, and most meanders cut during the canalization were retained within the levee system. Parsons also indicated that stream bank configuration is not maintained by active control methods and, thus, significant changes would require direct intervention as proposed in the reformulation of alternatives.

4. Sustainability and Implementable Actions

ARGH representatives stated the need for a more comprehensive view of restoration potential, starting with a definition of restoration and objectives (vision of the river). Parsons indicated that the concept of partial restoration was used for the reformulation of alternatives, and that two main objectives were adopted: establishment of a riparian corridor in areas susceptible to recurrent flooding, and provision of aquatic habitat more suitable for fish reproduction (slow moving waters during the spring/summer).

ARGH representatives indicated their interest in evaluation of a full restoration alternative to be subsequently reevaluated based on practical constraints. Parsons emphasized the need to assess constraints early in the alternatives formulation process and to work within the partial restoration concept. Middle Rio Grande partial restoration information by the Bosque Hydrology Group was quoted to support this point.

Parsons indicated that actions included in the alternatives must be implementable and reiterated the need to cooperate with the irrigation districts and other stakeholders as the basis for long-term sustainability of the restoration alternative.

5. Other Business and Proposed EIS Schedule

ARGH offered to provide further input on the restoration alternative. USIBWC indicated that, due to the reformulation of alternatives, Draft EIS completion is now anticipated for December 2002.

**United States Section,
International Boundary and Water Commission**

**Attendee List, Meeting
10:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., July 22, 2002
USIBWC Offices, El Paso Texas**

United States Commissioner Carlos M. Ramirez	(915) 832-4101
Carlos Marin, USIBWC	(915) 832-4157
Sylvia Waggoner, USIBWC	(915) 832-4740
Rong Kuo, USIBWC	(915) 832-4700
Doug Echlin, USIBWC	(915) 832-4741
Kevin Bixby, Southwest Environmental Center	(505) 522-5552
Jennifer Atchley, World Wildlife Fund	(505) 525-9537
Krista West, World Wildlife Fund	(505) 525-9537
Steve Harris, Rio Grande Restoration	
Kara Gillon, Defenders of Wildlife	(505) 248-0118
Bob Sulnick, Alliance for the Rio Grande Heritage	(505) 982-8626
Jim O'Brien, Tetra Tech	(928) 339-1935
R.C. Wooten, Jr., Parsons Corp.	(512) 719-6023
Carlos Victoria, Parsons Corp.	(512) 719-6007
James Hinson, Parsons Corp.	(512) 719-6814

**United States Section,
International Boundary and Water Commission**

**Meeting with
Alliance for the Rio Grande Heritage**

REVISED AGENDA

Monday, July 22, 2002, 10:30 a.m.
Large First Floor Conference Room #C-138

1. Introductions and meeting purpose: to discuss differences in opinion for future Canalization Project management
2. Flood control improvements vs. stream restoration / enhancement (modeling and non-structural flood control options)
3. Canalization Project stream morphology and limitations
4. Sustainability and implementable actions
5. Other business and proposed EIS schedule

UNITED STATES SECTION
INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY AND WATER COMMISSION
UNITED STATES AND MEXICO

Meeting with Alliance for the Rio Grande Heritage on
Canalization Project EIS

Monday, July 22, 2002
10:30 A.M.

USIBWC, 4171 North Mesa Street
The Commons, Building C
First Floor Large Conference Room #C-138

<u>NAME</u>	<u>AGENCY / ORGANIZATION</u>	<u>Telephone #s</u>
<u>James Hunsan</u>	<u>Parsons</u>	<u>512-719-6000</u>
<u>Carlos Victoria</u>	<u>Parsons</u>	<u>512-719-6007</u>
<u>R.C. WOOTEN</u>	<u>PARSONS</u>	<u>512-719-6623</u>
<u>CARLOS M. RAMIREZ</u>	<u>IBWC</u>	<u>(915) 832-4101</u>
<u>DOUGLAS ECHLIN</u>	<u>USIBWC</u>	<u>915/832-4741</u>
<u>Krista West</u>	<u>WWF</u>	<u>505-525-9532</u>
<u>Jennifer Montoya</u> (Atchley)	<u>WWF</u>	<u>505-525-9537</u>
<u>Rong Kuo</u>	<u>USIBWC</u>	<u>915-832-4747</u>
<u>Sylvia Q. Waggoner</u>	<u>USIBWC</u>	<u>915 832-4740</u>
<u>KEVIN BIXBY</u>	<u>SWEC</u>	<u>505-522-5552</u>
<u>Kara Gillon</u>	<u>Defenders of Wildlife/ Alliance for Rio Grande</u>	<u>505-248-0118</u>
<u>Jimmy O'Brien</u>	<u>Tetra Tech ISG</u>	<u>928-339-1935</u>
<u>Bob Sulwick</u>	<u>ARGH</u>	<u>(251) 282-8626</u>
<u>Carlos Marin</u>	<u>USIBWC</u>	<u>(915) 832-4157</u>
<u>Jim Robinson</u>	<u>USIBWC</u>	<u>(915) 832-4152</u>